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SUBJECT: SIXTH COMMITTEE RECONVENES ON OBSERVER STATUS ONLY
TO DECIDE IT NEEDS TO MEET AGAIN

¶1. Summary: On December 9, the Sixth Committee reconvened to consider agenda items 169: Observer status for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) in the General Assembly and 171: Observer status in the General Assembly for the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly. The debate mostly centered around granting observer status to the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly with most delegates (the United States, Iran, Russia, China, Greece, the United Kingdom, India, Argentina, South African, and Panama) in opposition and only three (St. Lucia, South Korea, and Ukraine) voicing support in favor. The PAM debate focused on whether to take action on the resolution today or at a later meeting of the Committee. After over two hours of debate, the Chairman of the Sixth Committee decided that the Committee needed to reconvene again in order to take action on the two resolutions. End Summary.

¶2. The Permanent Representative of St. Lucia introduced resolution A/C.6/64/L20 on granting observer status to the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly. He noted that the Council comprised of institutional knowledge and memory of the organization that should be tapped by the General Assembly. He commented that he saw no criteria in the regulations that would preclude accepting the Council as an Observer. South Korea made a similar comment that the General Assembly could benefit from the Council's experience.

¶3. The United States, Iran, Russia, China, Greece, the United Kingdom, India, Argentina, South Africa, and Panama made comments expressing concern about this resolution. Several delegates criticized the timing of introducing this resolution so late in the 64th session, noting that there was no perceived urgency behind either request. Some challenged the eligibility of the Council since it did not meet the criteria set forth in resolution 49/426. China took a stronger stance than most, stating that the Sixth Committee should determine the Council ineligible or at the very least defer it to the 65th session. Some delegations (Greece, the United Kingdom, and Iran) specifically urged for the agenda item to be addressed in the 65th session. Iran called for both resolutions to be deferred until the 65th session. India, dubbing the Council as the "Council of Elders," appreciated the idea behind the resolution (to harness the knowledge of the former Presidents) but suggested the Sixth Committee come up with a different approach.

¶4. Several delegations (South Africa, Peru, and Russia) took this debate as an opportunity to call for a reexamination of the procedures and criteria for granting observer status. Ukraine, one of the cosponsors of the resolution, cited the rich diplomatic experience of the Council and explained that it was one of its original founders in 1997. The Chairman laid down a marker that the resolution would open the door to thousands of NGOs to become GA observers, as had happened in ECOSOC, and expressed doubt that consensus would be reached to support it. He decided to defer the issue another meeting of the Sixth Committee to take action on this be held following consultations he would undertake with delegations.

¶5. Malta then introduced resolution A/C.6/64/L.19 on granting observer status to PAM. Iran followed and reiterated its call to defer consideration of both observer proposals until the 65th session, to give adequate time for consideration, and because there was no urgency. France, as cosponsor, addressed the Sixth Committee in favor of the resolution. The Chairman, noting Iran's concern, decided that the Sixth Committee should not take action on the resolution until its next meeting. Malta, followed by Tunisia, Cyprus, Portugal, Turkey, Colombia, and Senegal, urged the Chairman to reconsider and asked that the Committee take action now on the resolution, but the Chairman held his ground and repeated his earlier decision.

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